

Remap vote set this week

BY MARK BALLARD
and MARSHA SHULER
Capitol news bureau

Plans to redraw the district lines, from which state senators and state representatives will be elected for the next 10 years, have cleared their respective committees and are scheduled for a vote by their full chambers this week.

Both Senate President Joel Chaisson II and House Speaker Jim Tucker say they expect a lot of debate but few changes.

Legislators are entering the second week of a three-week special session to align the districts from which they and other officials are elected with the population shifts recorded by the recent U.S. census.

The full Louisiana House of Representatives is scheduled to take up its remap plan — House Bill 1 — on Monday morning. “I anticipate a full day of activity,” said Tucker, R-Terrytown,

ES - 1 2011
The goal for the Louisiana House’s 105 districts is a population of 43,174 each.

The ideal for the 39-district Senate is a population of 116,240 each.

sponsor of the plan.

The goal for the Louisiana House’s 105 districts is a population of 43,174 each. HB1 includes 30 black majority districts.

Chaisson, D-Destrehan, scheduled full Senate debate for Tuesday on his proposed state Senate district realignments, Senate Bill 1.

The ideal for the 39-district Senate is a population of 116,240 each. SB1 has 11 black majority districts.

Big population gains in East Baton

ADV MAR 27 2011
Rouge, Livingston and Ascension parishes — plus a large drop in the number of people living in the New Orleans area — have caused a lot of reshuffling of district lines.

The Baton Rouge area gains three House seats, including a new majority black district, and a new Senate seat.

“What’s happened is over the last 10 years, my district (population) really grew, in particular the southeast part,” said state Rep. Franklin Foil, R-Baton Rouge. That growth put him 10,000 people over the ideal population for a House district, he said.

“I had to get rid of quite a few precincts to get down to the appropriate number,” said Foil.

Foil said the subdivisions of University Club, the Country Club of Louisiana, Woodlawn, Old Jefferson, Briarwood and Santa Maria would no

► See REMAP, page 6A

REMAP

Continued from page 1A

longer be in his district.

Foil said the remap makes his district more compact. Neighborhoods that were split between his district and that of state Rep. Steve Carter, R-Baton Rouge, are now made whole. He would represent all of Kenilworth, University Acres and Magnolia Woods.

As the ripple effect spreads, Carter gains Jefferson Terrace, Westminster, Pine Park, which now are part of Republican state Rep. Erich Ponté’s district, as well as part of Capital Heights now represented by state Rep. Michael Jackson, No Party-Baton Rouge.

Changing one aspect of a redistricting measures requires changes to nearby districts, Chaisson said. District lines are made by precincts that must touch each other. No two precincts are the same in design or demographics. Each precinct has white, black, and other minority residents whose numbers — and voting histories — must be considered, he said.

Chaisson said the creation of a new senator for the Baton Rouge area required a lot of negotiations last week with the local delegation.

Jefferson Parish lost enough population to cause two senatorial districts to have merge, meaning two incumbents would have to face each other in the next election if both wanted to keep their jobs, he said.

But state Sen. Julie Quinn, R-Metairie, decided she would leave the Senate at the end of 2011 to run for a post in Jefferson Parish, he said.

Chaisson and Senate Secretary Glenn Koepp transferred Quinn’s Jefferson Parish precincts to the district currently represented by state Sen. Conrad Appel, R-Metairie.

Quinn’s Metairie-based District 6 stretches into Tangipahoa Parish, south of Hammond, which experienced a growth in population. Chaisson said he used those precincts as a base for a district that extended west across Livingston Parish — south of Interstate 12 — and into Baton Rouge.

“Nobody was happy with it,” Republican state Sen. Dan Claitor, of Baton Rouge, said of Chaisson’s initial plan. “But you have to start somewhere.”

Claitor said he was disappointed because it gave Tangipahoa Parish residents a larger say than East Baton Rouge Parish — 53,958 residents to 48,449, respectively. State Sen. Dale Erdey, R-Livingston, disagreed because it would have stripped him of constituents — about 18,000 — many of whom he had spent years getting to know.

“I grew up around the Collyell-Satsuma area,” Erdey said. “They’d disown me if I would have given them up.”

Erdey said he also had spent a lot of time and effort organizing the extension for Hooper Road through two Central precincts. “I didn’t want to give that up either,” Erdey said.

In the compromise eventually reached — the one the full Senate will vote on later this week — District 6 would, generally, start at Lake Maurepas in Tangipahoa Parish, go north instead of west, bridge across St. Helena and Livingston parishes then go south along the eastern side of East Baton Rouge Parish, taking in much of Pride, Central, Shenandoah and Old Jefferson down to the extreme southeast corner where Bayou Manchac empties into the Amite River at the end of Kendalwood Road.

The arrangement swings the strength to East Baton Rouge Parish, which will have about 66,000 residents to Tangipahoa’s roughly 48,000. The Livingston-St. Helena bridge is home to about 5,500 people. District 6 will be about 70 percent white.

Both President Chaisson and Speaker Tucker say because of the impact amendments have on surrounding districts, they will object to last-minute “substantive” changes offered on the floors of their respective chambers.

As it now stands, both Tucker and Chaisson say they believe the House plan and the Senate proposal would meet with U.S. Justice Department approval in time for candidate sign-up for fall legislative elections.

Because of Louisiana’s history of its white majority attempting to keep its black minority from having a full say in government, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 requires federal authorization for any changes in laws involving elections.